



Granite Pass

*One day west of the City of Rocks: Never saw such dust!
In some places it was actually to the top of the forewheels!
Fine white dust, more like flour. Our men were a perfect
fright, being literally covered with it.*

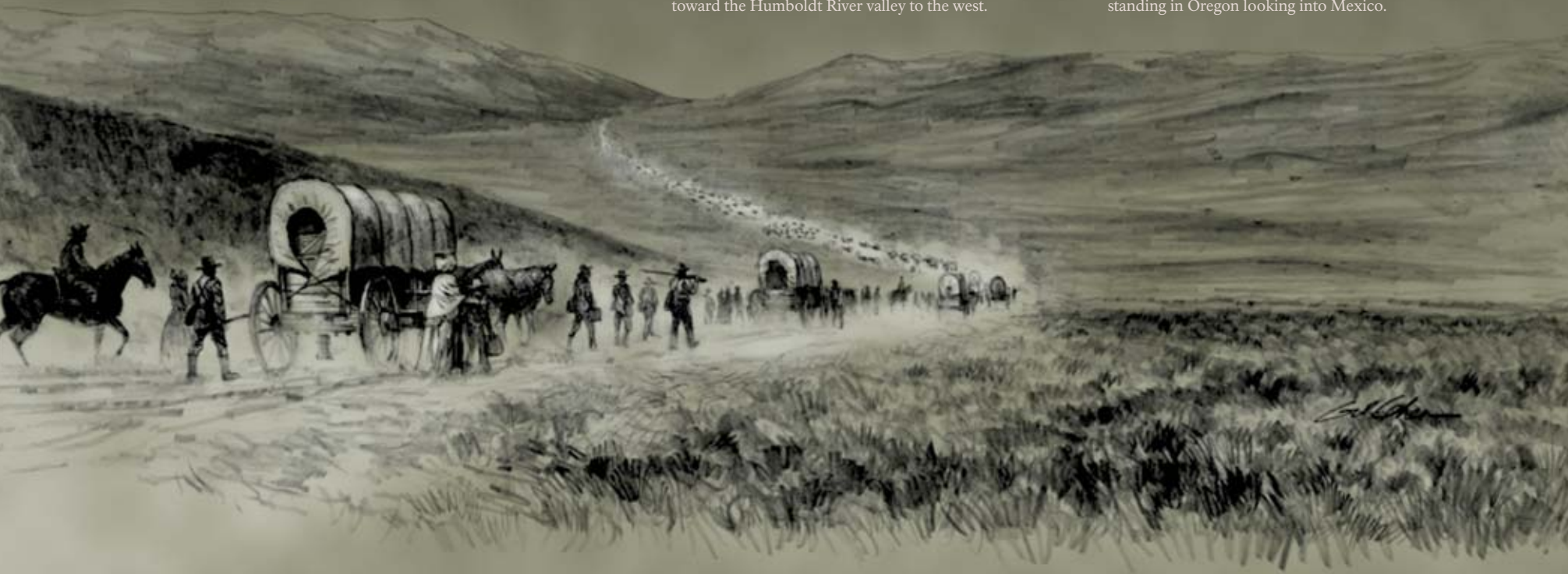
Emigrant journal entry, circa 1850

Heading west from the City of Rocks on the California Trail, emigrants aimed toward their next goal, Granite Pass, the gap in the distant ridge, six miles away. There was always a next goal.

At this point most California-bound emigrants were on the same trail; the various routes east of here had merged. A critical point on the trail, Granite Pass was a funnel through which emigrants poured from eastern prairies toward the Humboldt River valley to the west.

Try to picture the scene here in the summer of 1850 when an estimated 50,000 emigrants, 100,000 animals, and 20,000 wagons passed through this valley. The animals ate the grass; campfires consumed anything that would burn; feet, wagon wheels, and hooves thrust clouds of dust skyward.

Had you stood here looking at Granite Pass before 1848, as early emigrant parties did, you would have been standing in Oregon looking into Mexico.





Replica Wagon

That this journey...is perilous, the deaths of many testify....as I passed the fresh made graves, I have glanced at the side boards of the waggon, not knowing how soon it might serve as a coffin for some one of us.

Lodisa Frizzell, 1852

The wagon in front of you is a carefully researched replica of a typical covered wagon like those used by California Trail emigrants. Covered wagons were relatively small; they had to be lightweight. Western emigrants did not use the large "Conestoga" wagons often depicted in movies.

Imagine living out of it with your family for a weary, dusty six months as you crossed half a continent.



Feel free to examine the wagon,
but please do not climb on it.



Fading Away

There are thousands of names here I registered Mine on a large Rock.

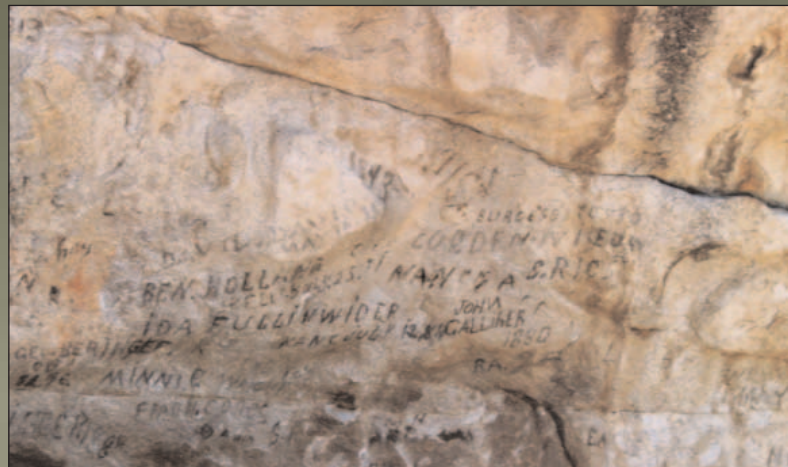
Richard Augustus Keen at City of Rocks, June 22, 1852

Throughout the West emigrants recorded their passing by writing their names — often with axle grease — at unique places like the City of Rocks. This rock, called Camp Rock, once contained hundreds of names. But these historic records are fast disappearing. Nature takes its toll, but so do careless or malicious humans. How long will remnants of the names remain? No one knows.

1930



1991



Enjoy Camp Rock's inscriptions from a distance. Please stay behind the fence.

Pinnacle Pass

After dinner a ride of 2 miles brought us to the outlet of this romantic vale, a very narrow pass, just wide enough for a wagon, and on either side very high, jagged, and thin walls of granite. . . . This is called the "Pinnacle Pass."

Goldsborough Bruff, 1849

The emigrants heading west on the California Trail probably fanned out as they crossed this basin, converging again at Pinnacle Pass, a gap in the rocks directly in front of you. They often did not travel in single-file lines; fanning out helped avoid dust from those ahead. Nor would many emigrants be riding in the wagons; most would have walked.

Pinnacle Pass provided the westbound exit from the City of Rocks. More than one traveler described the pass as narrow and rugged. In later years teamsters used cables to ease heavy freight wagons down the far side. Pinnacle Pass was rugged enough that 20th-century roadbuilders avoided it by dynamiting an easier route farther to the right for the present-day road.



Twin Sisters

They rise in a cone-like form from the bottom of the valley to a height of from 400 to 600 feet; they are round and quite regular in form, tapering gradually to a point.

Emigrant journal entry (Sawyer) describing the Twin Sisters, circa 1852

Of all of the wonders at the City of Rocks, the two peaks in front of you, called the Twin Sisters, stirred the greatest interest among passing emigrants. Many mentioned them in journals. Some sketched them, and in later years photographed them. After months crossing monotonous prairie to the east, the travelers found the peaks and spires of the City of Rocks — especially the Twin Sisters — sights to behold.

But while most emigrants saw the Twin Sisters as scenic wonders, few, if any, knew that they were geologic wonders as well. Though the “twins” look nearly identical, they are from vastly different geologic formations, consisting of rocks formed many millions of years apart.

